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SUBJECT: HOW COULD FRELIMO LOSE THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION,
AND WHAT WOULD HAPPEN AFTER?

REF: A. MAPUTO 725
[1](#)B. MAPUTO 713
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Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Todd Chapman for reasons 1.4(b+d)

[1](#)1. (S//NF) Post believes long-time ruling party FRELIMO is poised to do well in the October 28 presidential and parliamentary elections. Nevertheless, the emergence of a significant new opposition political party and growing popular discontent in Mozambique have caused some to think the unthinkable--that Frelimo could lose. While still considered highly unlikely, this cable will examine what events would have to happen for FRELIMO to lose an election, and possible implications in the unlikely event of an opposition victory.

FRELIMO Poised to do Well in Election

[1](#)2. (C) FRELIMO is using all resources available in the run-up to the election to ensure success. Multiple sources suggest FRELIMO may be tampering with voter registration, using government resources for campaigning, muzzling the media, choosing an election date that favors the party, stacking the judicial body that reviews election complaints, and perhaps even actively pitting opposition parties against each other (ref A). The opposition is divided and poorly organized; former leading opposition party RENAMO is cash-strapped and suffers from weak leadership. President Armando Guebuza and FRELIMO probably are still popular with large numbers of Mozambicans who are likely to vote for FRELIMO in the absence of a viable alternative, creating a "fauxmocracy" where the government holds and wins elections, but only because the opposition is so weak. Abundant FRELIMO resources and robust opposition weakness, coupled with a general culture of fear among voters to challenge the ruling party, create an environment where FRELIMO is likely to retain its hold on power.

But How Could the Opposition Win...

[1](#)3. (S//NF) Several disparate factors would have to converge in order for the opposition to win in October. The most important factor would be the emergence of a more-unified opposition. RENAMO, the Democratic Movement of Mozambique (MDM) which emerged from RENAMO, and the myriad other small opposition parties would have to work together to have a chance at holding their traditional strongholds and shifting a few FRELIMO dominated areas to the opposition. In 2004, President Guebuza received 64 percent of the votes. That

total would have to be reduced to below 50 percent to force a run-off, during which the opposition parties would have to unify behind the second-place candidate. The opposition beat itself in the Nacala Porto municipal election in November 2008 by dividing the vote among various parties and allowing FRELIMO to win in the run-off election though it received just less than 50 percent of the votes in the first round.

¶4. (S//NF) Equally important to the success of a unified opposition would be the ascent of a dynamic new leader. Afonso Dhlakama is the unwavering RENAMO leader, and is probably the biggest factor preventing RENAMO from progressing as a party. Dhlakama's support base has steadily declined because of his poor leadership, and many RENAMO rank and file either have or are considering defecting because of him. Dhlakama struggles to hold on to his own party, but clearly is not the right choice to lead a new opposition movement. Inside Mozambique he is seen as a spent political force. Beira Mayor Daviz Simango, the MDM Presidential candidate and himself a disgruntled former RENAMO member, is one such up-and-coming leader who could provide a populist and reformist face for the opposition and could heal the intense schism within the opposition. Many believe that this could be Simango's role leading up to the 2014 election, following the anticipated dismal performance by RENAMO in ¶2009.

¶5. (S//NF) Additionally, the opposition will have to capitalize on the generation gap between the revolutionary Marxist old guard, and the moderate younger generation who favor a more open-style democracy and an economic system not dependent on cronyism. Anecdotal evidence suggests the

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younger voters are no longer swayed by claims of liberation or Marxist credentials; they are more likely to care about education and economic opportunity in large part because many do not have memories of the liberation struggle or, for the very youngest, even of the civil war. An emergent opposition could present a concrete platform that appeals to these younger voters, and move beyond FRELIMO's hard-line traditions or RENAMO's militant rhetoric.

...And FRELIMO Lose?

¶6. (S//NF) In addition to a united opposition headed by a charismatic leader and appealing to younger voters, the ruling FRELIMO party will need to make a series of blunders if it is to lose. A publicized mass scandal involving senior FRELIMO members or the Guebuza family--a scandal more pervasive than the one that brought down Tanzania's Prime Minister in 2008, like a Mozambican version of Italy's massive Tangentopoli--could shake the public's confidence in FRELIMO and contribute to toppling the old guard. Several sources indicate top level FRELIMO members are involved in narcotics trafficking, and an additional number are complicit (Ref B). Furthermore, sources also indicate many party members at all levels are involved with corruption and kickback schemes (septel).

¶7. (S//NF) FRELIMO could lose if factions within the ruling party further fracture. The rift between moderates and hardliners was somewhat healed because of deliberate measures taken by moderate former President Joaquim Chissano, but hardliner Guebuza has brought an end to the politics of reconciliation. He so far has been powerful enough to keep the party disciplined, but there is an undercurrent of dissension, that if brought to the forefront, could hurt the party's ability to campaign and govern as a unified organization (ref C). Frelimo contacts report that Guebuza's circle within the Frelimo party is getting smaller, and the party's economic benefits are getting more concentrated.

¶8. (S//NF) Finally, FRELIMO would have to fail to adequately

rig the election for the scenario to come true. While all indications point to FRELIMO using its power as the incumbent to gain the campaigning and procedural upper hand, it may not have made sufficient preparation to stuff ballot boxes or otherwise rig the actual poll on election day. If FRELIMO, like Zimbabwe's ZANU-PF, were to be surprised on election day with a close vote, it may not be able to manipulate vote tabulation sufficiently to give FRELIMO the win, particularly if civil society's plans for a public parallel vote count are effective.

What Are the Implications for Mozambique?

¶9. (S//NF) Should FRELIMO lose the election, the party probably would refuse to accept the vote results because it would end the current patronage system and limit access to business interests--political analysts indicate exactly this happened in 1999, when Renamo may have won the popular vote. Some top leaders may also fear prosecution for corruption, narco-trafficking and other crimes. As a result, FRELIMO might be likely to crackdown on opposition leaders and civilians in political retribution, and also might start paying bribes to hold on to power. In the past, FRELIMO has withheld jobs and healthcare for RENAMO supporters, and a return to this sort of political intimidation is likely in the aftermath of any FRELIMO loss.

¶10. (S/NF) In the event of Frelimo defeat, Mozambique faces a high potential for unrest, and a moderate risk of that unrest turning violent. Rioting is a common reaction among city dwellers--most recently crowds rioted in February 2008 following transportation and food price increases (ref D)--and the military probably is unable to respond effectively outside of Maputo or other main cities. Furthermore, the military is probably unable and disinclined to contain unrest should it spread to more than a few areas simultaneously. Mozambican police forces have no capacity to quell large-scale rioting. Any violence probably would fall along political lines and is unlikely to have an ethnic component.

¶11. (S//NF) Mozambique's economy is likely to suffer in a scenario where a questionable election leads to violence.

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Dependent on foreign investor-led mega projects and international donors, whose funding supports more than half of GRM's budget, Mozambique would probably see a withdrawal of both foreign investment and, at least until the governing situation was better understood, donor funds. Mozambique, already susceptible to exogenous shocks, would become even more vulnerable under this scenario.

What Are the Implications for Southern Africa?

¶12. (S//NF) In a tightly contested election resulting in a Frelimo loss or a disputed Frelimo victory, international diplomatic efforts almost certainly will be needed to preserve stability in Mozambique. Many African leaders are reluctant to criticize a ruling party with strong liberation credentials, and Mozambique is unlikely to be an exception. The Southern African Development Community (SADC) is the most likely organization to lead diplomatic efforts. The ruling party in Mozambique has maintained strong ties with both senior South African ANC and Zimbabwean ZANU-PF leaders, virtually assuring a muted response from SADC to any election misdeeds. If its work in Zimbabwe and Madagascar serves as a guide, we can expect a drawn out process and many rounds of talks as SADC prioritizes stability. SADC will probably promote a negotiated political settlement, as in Kenya and Zimbabwe, as the best option for stability in Mozambique.

CHAPMAN